

about a moment earlier, in terms of dealing with the loose nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union, this was something that the 9/11 Commission paid great attention to and is one of the great deficiencies in our response to their recommendations. We should put those recommendations into effect now. Under the Real Security plan, that is exactly what we will do.

Another pillar: part of this pillar of homeland security is screening all containers and cargo. Again, if the threat to this country comes in the near term, in the near term, in a crate and not on a missile, then why aren't we investing more in that portal technology to keep nuclear material out of this country, to keep a nuclear weapon out of this country, to keep a radiological weapon out of this country?

Why is it in terms of cargo coming in through our airports that when you go to the airport to get on a flight and you have to take your shoes off and your belt off and you have to be wanded down, that at the same time in the cargo hold of that plane, where half of the cargo on most passenger jets is commercial, it is not your luggage, it is commercial cargo, 98 percent of that cargo or thereabouts is never screened for explosives? So you have to take off your shoes, yes; but you could ship a bomb the size of a small piano in a crate, and it may never be inspected for explosives.

That doesn't make sense. That is a real deficiency that has to be addressed. We cannot afford to wait until there is a calamity. Terrorists don't need to fly planes into our buildings to destroy the economy of this country. It would be enough to destroy that plane in mid-flight. We simply cannot afford to take these risks, and we must screen all containers and cargo.

The job at our ports is an even more difficult challenge, but it is one that can be met. It can be met through a homeland security plan that is tough, that is smart, and where the priorities match the nature of the risk. That is exactly what we have to do in homeland security. We have to prioritize, what are the greatest risks facing the country, and that is where we need to devote our greatest resources.

We need to safeguard our nuclear and chemical plants, which still have not been adequately safeguarded.

We can't outsource our security of our ports or airports or mass transit to other interests. We have to train and equip first responders. I had a group of first responders from my district in to visit with me today from the cities of Burbank and Glendale and other parts of Los Angeles to talk about their lack of interoperable communications equipment. They can't talk to each other across the cities. They are starting to be able to. They are patching this system together.

But here we are, years after 9/11. Can it be that our emergency responders still can't talk with each other, don't have that capability? That is simply

inexcusable. We saw on 9/11 the communication problems we had. The fact that we have not dealt with that problem still years later is beyond comprehension.

Finally, we have to invest in public health to safeguard Americans. You might recall it was just a few weeks ago the burning issue in the Nation was the avian flu. It still ought to be a burning issue in the Nation. Yet we saw when this was at the top of the news how unprepared we are.

We are still unprepared. That hasn't changed. The issue may have fallen out of the top of national news. It hasn't fallen out of the tomorrow of the national dangers facing this country. Those are not even man-made disasters.

Terrorists purposely attempting to spread a biological pathogen, perhaps at multiple locations in the United States at the same time, imagine the havoc that would ensue. Are we prepared? We are not nearly as prepared as we must be.

Let me turn to another pillar of the Real Security plan, that dealing with Iraq. The Real Security plan proposes that 2006 be a year of transition to full Iraqi sovereignty, that we have a responsible redeployment of U.S. forces, that we work harder to promote Iraqi political compromise to unite the country.

We saw this week that we had a change in the position of prime minister, and that is hopeful and we all hope that leads to the formation of a unity government. But those hopes have too often been disappointed. We must ensure that within the next 30 days that government is stood up, and it is a government that is representative of Sunnis, Kurds and Shiites that the Iraqi people will defend.

Ultimately, if the Iraqis choose civil war, if they choose to murder each other in large numbers, there is not much that we can do to stop it. But if they decide to be one country, if they decide as one country to take on the foreign jihadists and the terrorists, that is a fight they can win and a fight we can help them win. But if they are determined to squander this opportunity, if they don't form this unity government, then they have to understand that the patience of the American people is running out.

We must encourage our allies and others to play a more constructive role in Iraq, and we must hold the Bush administration accountable. We had a hearing in the International Relations Committee on Iraq this week. It was one of the first hearings we have had in years on Iraq.

I asked the panel, which included top level DOD, Department of Defense, and top level Department of State officials, I asked them, given the history of I think fairly well-recognized mistakes in the prosecution of the war, of course, the failure to find WMD, the standing down of the Iraqi Army, the failure to bring enough troops in to

maintain order that allowed the insurgency to get out of hand, who has been held accountable? Who has been held accountable for these errors?

And I ask my colleague, Mr. INSLEE from Washington State, do you know what the answer to me was?

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Mr. INSLEE. I do, actually. There is only one person that the Bush administration has fired involving Iraq policy. There is one single person. And that person was General Shinseki, who was right about Iraq.

He had the huge error in this administration of being truthful, forthright and accurate when he said we needed 400,000 to 500,000 troops to provide security in Iraq so it would not degrade into anarchy as it has done.

And as a result of that, the President, in the way they do this with the military, effectively fired him. He is the only person who the Bush administration has removed from office in Iraq, not the people really responsible for the problem at Abu Ghraib, not the Secretary of Defense, not Paul Wolfowitz who came to us and told us the incredible falsehood that this whole operation was going to be paid for, because Iraq was going to pump more oil, and it would not cost a penny to the American taxpayers. And you know how many billions of dollars now the taxpayers have suffered.

None of those people who have gotten almost every single thing wrong in Iraq that you can imagine. If you were going to design a train of errors, misjudgment, inefficiency, incompetence, acceptance of outright fraud in the contracting procedure, it would be hard to design a more inept train of abuses than this one, yet this President has sat there and done nothing.

Now, I have to admit he has not said they have done a heck of a job. He has not used that language. But he has failed to hold anybody accountable. And one of the things that I am very pleased that you have been a leader on, is holding the administration accountable for this, is accountable for U.S. tax dollars.

You know, there was a Democrat, Harry Truman, during World War II, who convened the Truman Commission in the U.S. Senate, and he insisted that during war time, even during war time, it is important to not allow the abuse of U.S. taxpayer dollars. And he ferreted out some of the fraud and abuse in military contracting that was going on in World War II even when our whole Nation was in jeopardy, in an existentialistic sense was in jeopardy, but he still said we need to be careful with these dollars.

We have had umpteen billions of dollars disappear into the sands of Iraq with nothing to show for it, no meaningful reconstruction, but tens of billions of dollars gone. We have seen multiple GAO reports, Inspector General reports.

We have seen multiple contractors, many of whom have been very closely